

General Tips on Speaking to the Media

Your PR representative can advise you on how to prepare for your specific media request, but a few general rules apply.

- **Call back quickly** – Journalists are generally under tight deadlines, and the earlier you respond, the more likely you will be included in the story.
- **Prepare** – Think of one or two main points or responses that you want to get across before beginning the interview. Have relevant facts at your fingertips. Your PR contact can help you clarify your thoughts ahead of time.
- **Listen** – Make sure you understand the question. Ask for clarification if necessary.
- **Get to the point** – Capture the essence of what you want to say in the first one or two sentences of your response. If you are given more time, add more details.
- **Keep it simple** – Most journalists are looking for clear, simple quotes that can be understood by a wide audience. Avoid technical jargon.
- **Use colorful language** – Use anecdotes, examples and analogies to illustrate your points.
- **Cite facts** – Specific facts and figures clarify points and add authority to an interview.
- **Be yourself** – Relax. Think of the interview as a normal conversation. Offer analysis/opinion in areas related to your experience/expertise with authority. If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, don't be afraid to admit you cannot speak to certain questions. Do not go "off the record." Consider everything you say attributable to you in print.
- **Correct mistakes** – If you misspeak, say so, and repeat your remarks. If the journalist is mistaken in fact or interpretation, mention the error and offer a correction.
- **Make your point** – If it appears that you will not be able to make a key point because of the flow of the interview, just bring it up yourself. (i.e. "Well, I cannot speak to that, however an important point to consider is...")

- **Be polite** – Treat the reporter with the respect that you would any professional. By building a relationship with journalists in your field, you can better understand the constraints under which they operate as well as the opportunities they provide as a link to the public.

Excerpts taken from the third edition of “On Deadline: Managing Media Relations” by Carole M. Howard and Wilma K Mathews